Labour Monthly

EDITOR R. PALME DUTT

A MAGAZINE OF INTERNATIONAL LABOUR

THIS YEAR NOT NEXT YEAR

PRINCIPAL CONTENTS

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NOTES OF THE MONTH

Government Reconstruction?—End the Fool's Paradise—The Critical Year—Axis Plans—Are We Prepared?—1942 or 1943?—Dangers of Over-confidence—Production Warning Signals—Victories and Reverses—Weighing Up the Balance—Production Programme—A Strengthened Collective Government—Admiral Byng's Example—The Will to Victory.

WHATEVER the Prime Minister's long-awaited statement on his return from America may have to offer (and these Notes are written before its delivery), one thing is certain. *The basic reconstruction of the Government cannot be longer delayed without the gravest danger.* This is now the central issue of the present situation. The whole prospect of the war, of strategic policy, of home policy, of production, of the Far Eastern situation, of pulling together the position in relation to Australia and India, of the European front, of political warfare, of co-ordinating our strategy with that of the Soviet Union, now turns on this. It is necessary to reinforce this issue from every possible angle, because the urgency of the present situation is not yet adequately realised.

OFFICIAL placidity above, which calmly dilates on the hypothetical future offensives of 1943 or 1944 or 1945, as if the year 1942 did not exist in the calendar save as a period of peaceful and unruffled preparation, is echoed by popular over-confidence below, which, under the stimulus of Soviet successes, the wholesale reports of cracks in the Nazi structure, or the figures of American production plans, begins to regard the danger point of the war as already past, and to turn the main attention to the problems of after the war. At all costs it is necessary to break this fool's paradise.

WE are approaching the most critical months of the most critical year of the war—not in 1943, *but this year.* The magnificent successes of the Soviet counter-thrust, which have spread such eager hopes throughout the world, must not be allowed to be turned into a smoke-screen for concealing reverses or weakness elsewhere, or blinding our view to the gravity of the conflict now opened. The power of Nazi Germany is not yet broken. On the contrary, the very extent of the Soviet successes makes more certain that the most desperate measures will be in preparation for the resumption of the offensive. Japan strikes blow after blow in the Far East, and lays bare the unpreparedness of Britain and the United States. The new military convention of the High Commands of Germany, Italy and Japan, signed on January 18, plainly indicates that the plans are being drawn up and the forces organised for the most intense Axis offensive in the near future.

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ACCORDING to a report of the Ministry of Economic Warfare issued in January, the already high figure of Nazi plane production is being further increased; the figure of Nazi submarine production is being increased; the figure of Nazi tank production is being maintained. The battering which their forces are receiving on the Eastern front must not hide from our view that this battering is taking place under conditions in which their mechanised advantage, which made possible their original advance by sheer weight of metal, is least able to operate. But this battering does not prevent that all the arsenals of Europe are being worked overtime for their renewed offensive. We may certainly hope that the extent and the inexhaustible strength and energy of the Soviet attack, throwing into confusion all the original calculations of the Nazi commanders, may also finally knock out of shape their plans for a resumed offensive. But we will do better to calculate on the most serious alternative.

WE know what the preparations of the winter of 1939-40 (accompanied by the same dilatory placidity in this country and France, and verbal carving up of the tiger's skin in advance) meant when it came to the thrust over all Western Europe in the spring of 1940. We know what the preparations of the winter of 1940-41 meant, when it came to the thrust over the Balkans in the spring of 1941 and the assault on the Soviet Union, followed by Japan's attack in the Far East. We can be certain that the very gravity of the situation of our enemies, when the first shadow of the future downfall of Fascism has already begun to appear over the horizon, will make the more desperate and determined the concentration of all their forces for their supreme thrust this year. And, indeed, already in this opening month of 1942 the tempo and intensity of the war in both hemispheres exceeds all previous experience of any January of war.

ARE we prepared? Malaya, Burma, the Philippines, Singapore, the absence of the Second Front in Europe; the collapse of the long-boosted air offensive which was to shatter Nazi strength in the winter of 1940-41; the ignominious end of Bevin's prophecy in November, 1940, that "within six months" British production would have outstripped Nazi production and the Nazi regime would "crumple up"—all only too plainly indicate the opposite. Can we be satisfied that the statesmen of this country and the United States appear to be content to meet the realities of 1942 with grandiose expositions of their plans for 1943 "when the production peak is reached," as if the enemy were a polite duellist, punctiliously waiting for his opponent to be ready? If the burning need of the Second Front in Europe, at the moment of greatest opportunity, left them cold, Japan is now applying its kill-or-cure medicine to open the most unseeing eyes to the character of the conflict which must be faced in 1942.

1942 OR 1943? The Soviet commanders and statesmen are under no illusions. Every Soviet statement with unflinching realism points to the decisive character of the conflict which is opening in 1942. Every Soviet statement drives home the lesson that the general offensive of the peoples for victory over Fascism must be launched in 1942. The divergence between the two dates, revealing two strategic conceptions, has aroused widespread comment. Of what use to speak of elaborate plans for setting up machinery for world co-ordination of strategy (with the solemn assigning of the Eastern European front to the Soviet Union and the Chinese front to China), if the basic issue between the Maginot mentality

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which surrenders point after point to Fascism, and the active spirit of the combined offensive which can finally conquer Fascism, is still unsettled? Or do our reluctant staffs and politicians, who found so many masterly reasons for inaction in the time of the Soviet sorest needs and setbacks, now discover in the Soviet successes new reasons for hesitation and for postponing once again the year of their effective participation? What is here involved is more than a question of technical co-ordination of strategy. What is here involved is the very heart of a unified allied strategy for victory.

OVER-CONFIDENCE is now the greatest danger. Over-confidence in words, combined with passivity and diffidence in action. This is not only a question of the ruling circles. In the popular mood there can be widely traced a dangerous combination of over-confidence, especially on the basis of the Red Army successes, alongside distrust, anger and frustration at the evidence of weakness and disorganisation at home. What is the result? Not a strengthening of determination and drive to force through the necessary changes so that we may do our part, but a readiness to rely on the broad shoulders of others, whether Soviet or American, a despair of effective change here, and a certain slackening of tension and effort. Thus the very circumstances which should be the stimulus to greater exertion become the pretext for the opposite.

THIS is visible in the field of production, where the refusal above of unified organisation, the inadequate use of man-power and plant, or the unjust imposition of burdens in the taxation of overtime is accompanied by a re-emergence of absenteeism, a crop of minor local strikes, opposition to necessary changes of practices or the fullest employment of women—all bespeaking the sense of lessened danger, together with dissatisfaction at the way things are run. It is visible in the inadequate political campaign, the passive tolerance of such a scandal as the continuance of the Munichites in the Cabinet, the still only limited mobilisation of the working-class movement and lack of effective working-class unity. All these are danger signals which need to be taken to heart. They point to a situation which can only be met by a basic reorganisation and renewal, in the personnel of the Government, in the organisation of industry, in every sphere, and at the same time by a united campaign throughout the country to mobilise the working-class and democratic movement, to force through the changes that are necessary and to win the confident participation of the entire people.

CERTAINLY there are grounds for a sound confidence in the perspective of the present situation. It is a great change from the world outlook of a year ago, or even six months ago. For the first time in their existence the main Nazi armies have met an enemy who has not only been able to stand up to them, but now to drive them backwards. That is a change which has aroused new confidence in every people in the world. The twenty-six States and nations who have signed the Pact on January 1 for the destruction of Hitlerism represent at last the ranging of the overwhelming forces of mankind in the common fight. In addition to the twenty-six States, the South American Continent is now ranged, in greater or less degree, with the anti-Axis camp. The Chinese successes at Changsha have shown the way forward against Japan. At last the immeasurable resources of the giant American Republic are beginning to be fully organised for a production programme intended to reach the vast totals of 60,000 planes and 45,000 tanks in 1942. The conditions for the final defeat of Hitlerism are being brought into existence.

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BUT the growth of the forces for victory must not blind us to the immediate sharpness of the present position, or the urgency of the problems which face this country. The Far Eastern events have revealed once again the tale of unpreparedness, of forces "not on the alert," of boastfulness followed by withdrawals, of divided authority, bureaucratic delays, reactionary prejudice and failure to mobilise the people. Australia is seething, and the Australian press openly names the Munichite Ministers whose withdrawal they demand. India has not yet been won to willing co-operation in the common fight; and with the war at the very gates of India, the Government has not yet attempted to enter into negotiations with the elected representatives of the Indian people. The consequences of reactionary anti-democratic policy playing into the hands of Fascism, and refusal to mobilise the people, have already exacted a heavy price in Malaya, in Hong Kong, in Burma. Must the same experience be repeated on a more terrible scale in India? It is no use passively blaming those on the spot. The key to the situation is here in Britain.

THE American production programme is vast. But the first effects of the American production programme will be to increase the stringency here. It must never be forgotten that in the last war only four cannon produced in the U.S.A. to meet its war requirements reached the front before the close of hostilities—nineteen months after the declaration of war, and the American troops dispatched to the Western Front had to be equipped with British and French artillery, rifles, aeroplanes and tanks. The direct involvement of the United States in the war, and its own urgent needs in the Pacific, necessarily affect the volume of supplies available for Britain and Europe; the rapid expansion of its production programme necessarily limits the supplies of materials, such as steel or scrap iron, available for this country. While the ultimate effect of the American production programme guarantees superiority for the Allies, the immediate effect increases the extent to which we in this country must rely on our own resources for the expanding needs of war in two hemispheres, in the Far East, in the Mediterranean, for the maximum supply to the decisive Eastern Front, and for the preparation of the indispensable Second Front in Europe.

BUT the production position in this country raises increasingly grave and justified concern. *The Times* articles on "Brakes on Production" at the beginning of the year made public property the existing disorganisation and weaknesses on the present anarchic basis of the self-rule of the monopolies, which have been common knowledge to all closely concerned. It is true that "there is no supreme informed body which plans and controls production to the advantage of the war machine as a whole." It is true that the controls are run by the representatives of the monopolies financially interested in the restriction of production rather than its expansion, in calculations of their post-war position, and in the use of their powers for further concentration and strengthening of their own domination against their rivals, and against the full utilisation of the capacity of smaller firms. It is true that State powers have been used freely against the traditional rights of the workers, against small business, against the small farmers, against minor racketeers, but never in practice against a monopolist, against big business, against the banks, or against the great landed interests. The consequences are writ large in the situation in every industry, in steel, on the railways, in coal, in plane production, in tank production, as well as in the use of land and food production. Drastic measures are here necessary for effective

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State control under a Central Planning Commission (which will necessitate a Minister of Production) and Regional Boards with full executive powers.

ALL these measures can only be carried out by a strengthened and reorganised Government ready and able to carry through the fight which they will require. Alike in the field of war strategy, in the political field, in relation to India, in the mobilisation of the manpower and resources of the Empire, in the home field and in production, the same conclusion is paramount. The reconstruction of the Government to carry out the present urgent tasks is imperative. The dead wood must be thrown out, irrespective of party considerations. The strongest existing and new anti-fascist forces must be brought in to build up a real collective leadership around the Prime Minister, capable of initiating and enforcing the necessary decisions. The representation of the most effective forces of the working-class movement needs to be strengthened. The Labour movement should take the forefront in pressing through necessary changes, alike in personnel and in policy.

SUCH a renewal and purging of weak, incompetent and Munichite elements needs to be extended to the higher command of the military services, the staff committees, the diplomatic and civil services, and the State controls and controlling positions of industry. A little less laughing and sneering at Nazi frequent removals of generals, and a little more attention to our own might not be out of place. No doubt the French laughed and sneered immoderately when Admiral Byng was shot for losing Minorca. But the British won that war, which laid the foundations of the modern Empire. In a democratic anti-fascist war the same ruthless spirit is all the more necessary.

WE need a Government which will organise and lead the people for victory in unity with the Soviet Union, and the other peoples of the democratic alliance, through the decisive conflicts of the coming year. Again and again the realist leaders of the Soviet Union have made clear that the peoples of Europe must set their compass for the decisive battles during this year, that the present counter-thrust of the Red Army is not yet the general offensive, but that the general offensive must come this year. As the Moscow broadcast recently declared :—

> The Red Army has taken the offensive, but nowhere has it placed tremendous forces in the field. This is not yet the general offensive; it is only the beginning. . . . The offensive really begins with all peoples of Europe hearing in the din of battle the voice of liberty and the call to action, and rising in a popular war which will engulf the Continent from the northernmost tip of Norway to Southern Greece, and from the Vistula to the Atlantic. 1942 will mark this great and decisive offensive against Nazi tyranny.

That is the spirit of victory. That is the spirit we want to see in our Government. But for this we need a Government which has thrown out the vacillators and the defeatists, and composed only of the most irreconcilable enemies of Nazism who can inspire and will inspire the people with this same vision and ruthlessly organise the measures to make it a reality.

R. P. D.

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British-Soviet Trade Union Unity

*A Speech**

by N. SHVERNIK

TO-DAY our great country represents one single armed camp, in which all the peoples of the U.S.S.R., together with our Army and Navy, are carrying on a great war of liberation for the honour and independence of their Motherland, for the destruction of the German Fascist armies.

You and we have the happiness to belong to the camp of liberation, to the camp of the heroic fighting peoples of the Soviet Union and Great Britain, to the camp which sets before itself the aim, not of seizing territory or enslaving peoples, but of emancipating from the Fascist yoke millions of people whose sufferings have surpassed everything that humanity has ever known during its countless ages of history.

That is why, in my opinion, our joint and friendly co-operation as trade unionists is of the greatest importance for the struggle with Nazism.

From that point of view, the setting up of the Anglo-Soviet Trade Union Committee, the visit of the British trade union delegation to the U.S.S.R., and our return visit to Britain are fraught with the highest importance—not only as a proof of the unity and friendship of the Soviet and British trade unions, of the working class of Great Britain and the Soviet Union, but also as evidence that we have found the appropriate forms in which to organise our common action in the battle against Hitlerite Germany.

The basis of collaboration between the Soviet and British trade unions is the agreement drawn up at the first session of the Anglo-Soviet Trade Union Committee and since ratified by the General Council of the British Trade Union Congress and by the Presidium of the Central Council of Trade Unions of the U.S.S.R.

The Agreement declares that the British and Soviet trade unions have come together to organise mutual aid in the war against Hitlerite Germany. This means that the Soviet and British trade unions subordinate all their work to the task of the defeat and destruction of Hitlerism, affording one another mutual aid in solving the problems which arise in the course of their daily practical work.

That is the very heart and essence of our Agreement, the foundation of the friendly relations between the Soviet and British trade union movements, which must be daily reinforced.

In connection with the Agreement between the Soviet and British trade unions I should like to touch on another question as well. Both parties have undertaken to give the greatest measure of support to the Governments of Great Britain and the Soviet Union in their common war for the defeat of Hitlerite Germany.

Why did the delegations of the two trade union movements consider it necessary to include this point in the Agreement as a mutual obligation? We had in mind, in the first place, the character of the friendly relations existing between the Governments of Great Britain and the Soviet Union. Our two countries are allies; they are carrying on a great common war of liberation, a just war against the German Fascist aggressors. Can the trade unions, as mass organisations of the working class, stand aside in such conditions and be dispassionate observers of the struggle against Hitlerism?

No. Not only the organisations themselves, but not a single leader, not a single public man, if they genuinely love their country, if the freedom and honour of their people are truly dear to them, can stand aside from this great struggle. They are bound to play an active part in it, and to help their Governments to batter down Hitlerism. In our country, as in Great Britain, every lever must be set into motion which can augment our fighting strength for that purpose.

* From a speech delivered by the leader of the Soviet Trade Union Delegation on January 2, 1942, at the General Council of the Trades Union Congress. N. Shvernik is Secretary of the All-Union Central Council of Trade Unions and is a member of the Political Bureau of the C.P.S.U.

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The trade unions are, of course, among the most powerful of all social levers. They possess immense power. And they must obviously be brought into full action and used to the utmost for this sacred war against Hitlerism.

In what questions can and must the trade unions of Great Britain and the Soviet Union afford their support to the Governments of their respective countries?

First and foremost I think they are in duty bound to organise their members for the successful execution of any measure their Governments may decide upon that is calculated to serve the struggle against Hitlerism.

The organisation of our members for that purpose is of the very greatest importance in determining the fate of such measures. We are bound constantly to explain to the mass of the workers the importance of such measures, and their bearing on the aim of victory over Hitlerism. This involves, in our opinion, the constant improvement of our mass explanatory work, and patient efforts to see that every trade unionist should understand all the implications of what is going on, and should honestly and self-sacrificingly carry out everything that the cause of the struggle with Hitlerism requires of him.

We cannot for a moment forget that our common enemy is cunning and treacherous. He is skilled in social demagogy. He knows how to play on instincts of backwardness, and how to excite antagonism between more advanced and less advanced workers.

Against him we must launch on a bigger scale, and more actively than before, such powerful propaganda weapons in our mass work as the press, the radio, mass meetings of the workers, etc. That is also one of the implications of the Agreement we have concluded.

But by the side of this there is a fundamental and dominant problem in our work. It is to increase our industrial efforts, in order to augment the output of tanks, planes, guns, shells and other war material. Without more armaments we shall not smash Hitler. But we can only bring about an increase in the output of armaments if every working man and woman day by day contributes their individual effort to increase productivity of labour.

We require, I am convinced, to get this simple truth deep into the minds of our members: That the productivity of labour is the foundation for an increase in the output of armaments, and an increase in the output of armaments is the foundation for victory over Hitler.

Modern war, as no war in the past, demands an immense quantity of weapons of all kinds. Every hour of the war consumes a vast number of tanks, planes, guns, mortars, shells, cartridges and so forth. We have to bear in mind not only that, but also the unquestionable fact that Hitlerite Germany has at her disposal immense possibilities of production. To meet the needs of the German Fascist army there are working not only the industries of Germany herself, but also those of France, Czechoslovakia, Belgium and a number of other States conquered by Hitlerite Germany. We have to bring about a much greater output of armaments in our own and the Allied countries than Germany is turning out.

We must tell the working men and women that if they don't want to be slaves of Hitler, if they hold dear the lives and the honour of their wives and children, their fathers and mothers, if they want to live in freedom and independence, they must fight day by day for an increase in the productivity of labour, they must produce more and more armaments, and produce them in adequate quantity to meet the needs of the front, the requirements of victory over the Hitlerite bandit hordes. To the victory over Hitlerism, that worst foe of humanity, must be subordinated all else in the lives of every one of us, every working man, every working woman.

How do matters stand with the struggle for an increase in the productivity of labour and in the output of armaments in our country—the Soviet Union?

The working class of our country, like the whole Soviet people, has been displaying unexampled labour heroism since the very first days of this great war to protect our Motherland against Hitlerite Germany. Every working man and woman in our factories, as your representatives

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who had free access to our factories were able lately to see for themselves, considers it his or her sacred duty to provide the Red Army with the maximum quantity of war material.

I would underline at this stage that our women, who have flocked into industry in their hundreds of thousands to take the place of their menfolk called to the Colours, have displayed equally with the men an unprecedented spirit of resolution and self-sacrifice—resolution to master the intricacies of production previously unfamiliar to them, self-sacrifice in facing the inevitable personal difficulties and temporary hardships.

What is the source of the heroism and devotion of the Soviet working men and women during all these months?

It lies first of all in their understanding that the peoples of the Soviet Union are fighting in a just cause, fighting the Nazi invaders to defend the liberty, independence and honour of their Mother Country, and also to bring about the liberation of millions of people groaning under the yoke of Hitlerism.

But even given this spirit, we do not consider unnecessary—on the contrary, we consider most important and essential—to organise the workers specifically for more effective and active support to our Army and our Navy, by unflagging work in the factories in order to provide the front with an ever-increasing number of tanks, and anti-tank guns, anti-tank rifles, mortars and machine-guns, rifles and aeroplanes.

What do we mean by organising the workers for this purpose? Throughout our industries, production conferences are organised in the factories periodically, at which representatives of the management discuss with the workers, not necessarily of the whole factory, but also of its shops, or sections, or even of particular groups of machines, what is wrong, what is lacking and what can be done to improve matters. Often, again, it is the workers of a particular craft in the factory who meet together to discuss a particular difficulty, and are able to draw upon both the information which the management can put at their disposal and the experience of the better-skilled workers in their own ranks.

In giving effect to the recommendations of these conferences, secondly, and indeed in the constant effort to fulfil and overfulfil the output plan of the factory, our workers contest with each other in that spirit of socialist emulation which, as you doubtless know, has been increasingly a characteristic of our industrial life under the guidance of Lenin and Stalin, and which has led to those remarkable increases in our industrial output from year to year known to the whole world.

A particular feature of the socialist emulation is the utmost encouragement of the workers to elaborate and apply rationalisation measures and inventions of every kind. This has provided an ever-fruitful means of increasing production and improving its quality.

We for our part have no doubt that in every liberty-loving country, in every country constituting our Alliance against Hitlerite Germany, the working people are just as capable of self-sacrifice and heroic effort for the cause which we all hold dear. . . .

It is difficult to convey in words all the horrors which the Hitlerite bandits have been guilty of at Rostov, Kalinin and the other places liberated from the Hitlerite occupation. The blood freezes in one's veins at all the crimes which these bandits are committing in the districts of the Soviet Union which they have temporarily occupied.

Can one doubt after this the justice of the Soviet peoples' demand that the reply to the Hitlerite bandits should be: "Blood for blood, death for death"? There can be no mercy for the German Fascist invaders, who trample like wild beasts on every and any laws of human morality.

Hitler and his accomplices in crime wanted a war of annihilation. That war of annihilation they will get. They are already experiencing it on their own hides, before Moscow, Leningrad and in other districts of the Soviet Union. They will go on experiencing it as long as the invaders of our territory have not been defeated and exterminated to the last man. . . . .

There has been a turning point reached on the fronts of the war going on in our

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country. On all the fronts the offensive of the Nazi armies has not only been stopped, but under the direct leadership of our comrade Stalin has begun to turn into their rout .... It is unnecessary for me to dwell in detail upon these successes to-day. But I want to underline that, however much we all rejoice in the victories of the Red Army, we have no reason yet to relax.

The enemy has suffered heavy defeats: but he is not yet broken, he is not yet destroyed. Hitler and his accomplices will still try to gather up the forces that remain to them for more than one desperate and dangerons blow. We are all still faced with a protracted struggle against Hitlerism.

Consequently we cannot for a single moment weaken the spirit of mobilisation, but on the contrary must raise it and do everything possible to reinforce the fighting capacity of the armies of our great countries. To strengthen their fighting capacity means that they must be supplied with a daily increasing quantity of armaments of every kind. Our cause is a just one. Victory over Hitler will be ours. But that victory still lies ahead, it must be achieved and won.

We, the people of the Soviet Union, will not consider our struggle against Hitlerism ended until we have destroyed all the Germans who have occupied our territory. No mercy for the occupying Germans—that is the task of the peoples of the U.S.S.R., of the fighters, commanders and political workers of our army. That task we are fulfilling, and will continue to fulfil.

Comrades, this is the note on which I conclude my statement. I want to emphasise that we delegates of the Soviet Trade Unions are visiting you not only as guests of the General Council, but as fighters from the front of the great war of emancipation.

We come to you as friends, with the sincere intention of telling you, the working-class of Great Britain, the British people, about the heroic struggle which our people have now been waging for nearly seven months against the German robbers, and to acquaint ourselves with the courageous struggle of the British people against Hitlerism.

We sincerely desire that every day of our stay in Britain should be of the maximum benefit for our common cause—the struggle against Hitlerite Germany.

Publications Received

Chapayev by D. Furmanov (Lawrence & Wishart, 3s. 6d., 311 pp.).

Heroes of the Atlantic by Ivor Halstead (Lindsay Drummond, 7s. 6d., 235 pp.).

Retribution by Gerald Abrahams (W. H. Allen & Co., Ltd., 6s., 124 pp.).

Russia Fights by Michael MacAlpine (Lawrence & Wishart, 1s. 6d., 72 pp.).

Workers Protective Legislation in Poland by Jan Stanczyk and I.L.O. (Polish Social Information Bureau, 3d., 30 pp.).

League of Coloured People. News-Letter by Dr. Harold Moody (League of Coloured People, 6d., 75 pp.)

Russia Resists by Pat Sloan (Frederick Muller, 2s. 6d., 117 pp.).

On Lenin—Little Stalin Library No. 2—by J. V. Stalin (Lawrence & Wishart, 6d., 32 pp.).

Universities in the U.S.S.R. (University Labour Federation, 2d., 20 pp.).

Problems of the Building Industry, a Marx House Syllabus (Lawrence & Wishart, 3d., 40 pp.).

War Time Building, Tenth Report of A.A.S. and T.A. (Association of Architects, Surveyors and Technical Assistants, 6d., 24 pp.).

Scorch the Earth by Patrick Raymond (C.P.G.B., 3d., 24 pp.).

Freedom—Vryheid (Communist Party of South Africa, 3d., 16 pp.).

Kingdom Come Magazine (Kingdom Come, 1s. 6d., 55 pp.).

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Japan—Strength and Weakness

by R. PAGE ARNOT

FORMIDABLE enemy as Japan has already shown itself to be, what is its staying power? On what resources can it reckon? These are the questions now beginning to be asked. The answer to them, however, lies not merely in the enumeration of its production units, its manufactures, its exports and imports, but in a consideration of its class structure and its peculiarities as an imperialist power.

Japan is a classic example of the law of uneven development of capitalism on which such stress was laid by Lenin. In his book, "Imperialism, the Highest Stage of Capitalism," written in 1916, Lenin, summing up the essential economic features of monopoly capitalism (which applied also to Japan as an Imperialist Power), pointed out that "Finance capital and the trusts are increasing instead of diminishing the differences in the rate of development of the various parts of world economy."

As a manufacturing country Japan has leapt forward more rapidly than any other capitalist country in the last thirty years, and especially in the last ten. Its manufactured products have flooded into every market of the world, and many of the cheap electric lamps and fittings, household utensils and items of clothing were familiar in the cheaper shopping centres in Britain in the last few years. In cotton textiles, where Britain had been the supreme and unchallenged exporter for a century and a half, Japan in the last fifteen years rapidly overtook and passed the Lancashire mills, and by 1935 had become the foremost exporter of cotton textiles in the world market.

If we take the year 1913 as 100 in each case then the index of industrial production in Japan, as compared with the United States and Great Britain, is as follows :—

	1913	1925	1929	1936
Japan	100	222	297	450
U.S.A.	100	151	170	150
Great Britain ...	100	87	99	115

Thus from the year before the war of 1914-18 up to the beginning of the world economic crisis in 1929, Japan had not only doubled but nearly trebled its industrial production. By 1936 the tonnage of its navy had risen to 841,000 tons as compared with 1,072,000 for the U.S.A. and 1,196,000 for the United Kingdom; and in these last five years has been built at fierce speed, not to replace sinkings, but to be in an overwhelmingly strong position to send ships to the bottom.

If we take exports of manufactured goods, the figures are instructive—and the percentage increases :—

EXPORTS OF MANUFACTURES
(In million dollars)

Average for 1895-99	Average for 1909-13	Average for 1925-29	1936	1925-29 as Percentage of 1909-13 =100	1936 as Percentage of 1909-13 =100
United Kingdom					
980.5	1750.3	2788.6	1003.6	159.3	57.3
Germany					
566.6	1277.8	1913.6	1136.7	149.8	89.0
France					
383.5	704.3	1238.6	309.4	175.9	43.9
U.S.A.					
185.0	597.0	2114.8	681.4	354.2	114.1
Japan					
—	73.5	374.5	268.9	509.5	365.9

Similarly with basic industries the same extremely uneven development is shown, with Japan starting from scratch and rapidly pulling up on the others: but this applies only to the rate of development, and the main significance of the following figures is clearly the relative weakness of Japanese heavy industry :—

COAL OUTPUT (in million tons)

	1900	1913	1929	1936
U.S.A.	245	517	552	442
United Kingdom	229	292	262	232
Germany... ...	109	190	163	158
France	33	41	54	45
Japan	7.5	21	34	38

PIG-IRON OUTPUT (in million tons)

	1900	1913	1929	1936
U.S.A.	13.8	31.0	43.3	31.5
United Kingdom	9.0	10.3	7.7	7.8
Germany... ...	7.5	19.3	13.4	15.3
France	2.7	5.2	10.4	6.2
Japan	0.02	0.2	1.5	2.9

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The last figures immediately raise the question of Japan's staying power. For it is true that not only in output of heavy industry, but still more in the raw materials of heavy industry, Japan is weak (*e.g.*, "in 1937 Japan produced only 19 per cent. of the iron ore it consumed, 77 per cent. of the pig-iron, 9 per cent. of the crude oil, 44 per cent. of petroleum products, and only 62 per cent. of the copper"—*New Masses*, December 16, 1941), and this weakness is bound to become more and more a dominating factor the more the war is protracted.

On the other hand, there is the danger, already shown in numerous economic writings during the first six months of the war against Germany, of underestimating the methods used by the enemy to overcome a weakness of which he certainly has not failed to be aware. Nor should arguments be used which would apply equally to Great Britain (*e.g.*, tiny home production of oil) if she ceased to be the dominating sea power. For the Japanese navy similarly dominates the Western Pacific. So while the basic weakness is there—and is, of course, bound to tell in the long run—it must not be forgotten that :—

(1) Part and parcel of the war economy of Japan in the last decade, and especially since 1936, has consisted in the piling up of reserves of raw materials.

(2) Ever since war with China began in July, 1937, Japan has been able to import enormous supplies of essential war materials from precisely those countries (British Empire and the U.S.A.) whose "appeasement" policy has now recoiled on themselves so disastrously in the Pacific. The Vice-President of the United States, Mr. Wallace, in an article in *Collier's Magazine*, remarked on an increase in 1940 in Japanese import of aluminium of 250 per cent. !

(3) The occupation of Manchuria, Chahar and Jehol from 1931 onwards, and then of the industrially most-developed provinces of China in 1937-8, has enabled the Japanese to use not only the raw material resources, but the manufacturing capacities of these occupied provinces just as the Nazis have done with occupied Europe.

(4) Conquest of Malaya alone has already deprived the Allies of a chief source of rubber, tin, bauxite and iron ore, etc. ; and, in parts at any rate, owing to the failure to apply a "scorched earth" policy with Chinese or Soviet thoroughness, has transferred these sources to the Japanese. Even if the oil wells of Borneo have been effectively put out of commission, the possession of the oilfields would tell in favour of Japan and against the Allies if the Pacific war goes on long enough.

Thus the calculation of Japan's strength and weakness cannot be conclusive on the basis of its production and trade figures, but must take into account its capitalist structure, which is of recent growth.

This speed of industrial development follows on the unparalleled rapidity of the change in the later nineteenth century. Japan leapt from feudalism into modern capitalism within a generation, and since the Sino-Japanese war of 1894-5 has seized colonies and acquired an empire by war after war.

This series of robber wars early gave the signal that Japan was becoming an imperialist power. But the signal was also given by the appearance of other economic features of imperialism. Between 1909 and 1927 the number of big companies (with over five million yen of capital) grew in number from 38 to 687, and the proportion of their capital to all company capital grew from 36 per cent. to 64 per cent. ; the number of banks fell from 2,155 in 1914 to 563 in 1935, and of these the Big Five in ten years (from 1926-36) had increased their percentage of total deposits from 24 per cent. to 42 per cent. All basic industries are controlled by cartels which are dominated by a number of companies, and these companies are owned by a handful of monopolies such as Mitsui, Mitsubishi, Sumitomo, Yasuda, Okura, Furukama, Kuhara. Towering above all are Mitsui and Mitsubishi, giant trusts that have a finger in every pie, through their banks, daughter companies and interlocking directorates. The hundreds of Mitsui companies have a capital of 6,000,000,000 yen, while the Mitsubishi undertakings run to 3,250,000,000 yen. Round these staple industries the octopuses spread their tentacles : *coal*, 95 per cent., output owned by Mitsui and Mitsubishi ; *copper*, 99 per cent., Mitsubishi ; *iron and steel*, 90 per cent. pig-

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iron and 65 per cent. steel in merger owned by Mitsui, Mitsubishi, Okura and State; *shipbuilding*, 100 per cent., Mitsubishi; *cement*, in cartel dominated by Mitsui and Yasuda; *cotton*, 98 per cent., spindleage in cartel dominated by Mitsui and Mitsubishi; *artificial silk*, 90 per cent. capacity in five companies headed by Mitsui and Mitsubishi; *paper*, 97 per cent. output in cartel dominated by Mitsui; *mercantile marine*, 75 per cent. total tonnage in hands of Mitsui, Mitsubishi and Sumitomo; *means of transport*, 90 per cent. in hands of Mitsui and Mitsubishi. The list of the Big Five banks runs: Mitsui, Mitsubishi, Sumitomo, Daishi, Yasuda. The millionaire newspapers that were quoted here as Japanese opinion: *Mainichi* and *Shimbun*, Mitsui-owned; *Asahi* and *Nichi-Nichi*, Mitsubishi. And the tentacles stretch further, into broadcasting (of Japan's 25 wireless stations 12 are the voice of Mitsui), into universities and political parties. Everything has its price whatever be its value, and Mitsui with Mitsubishi are in the market as buyers. It is they, too, with their sister trusts, that largely own the Japanese undertakings in the Malay Archipelago and elsewhere overseas; and have had joint interests internationally with some of the corresponding trusts in U.S.A., Britain, France, etc.

This swollen octopus type of trust (paralleled in the 1919-23 mushroom Stinnes concern in Germany) is a reflection of the turbulent growth of Japanese finance-capital already demonstrated in the high frequency of its predatory wars and acquisitions of colonies. Just as the "Nabobs" plundered India in the eighteenth century, so in the twentieth century, with a more "scientific" exploitation, the trusts have laid hold on each new colony of Japanese imperialism—in Manchuria, for example, the concerns and banks of Mitsui, Mitsubishi and Sumitomo hold over half all mineral undertakings (coal, oil, aluminium, magnesium). Nor is this turbulent growth and seizure of colonies surprising. Japan, opened up to the world market late in the day when the nineteenth-century capitalism was already in a transition to imperialism, had as a condition of the growth of its bourgeoisie to full rivalry the most rapid development of monopoly. For its ruling class Japan had the choice—either to become a colony or an imperialist power. The third alternative of a revolutionary overthrow of feudalism with rapid transition to socialist revolution was not yet ripe. Once this is understood, it can be seen that Japan's bourgeoisie, as latecomers, were bound to compress their imitation of the growth of the British Empire from 400 into 40 or 50 years. Like Britain, Japanese profits and superprofits could only grow on the basis of a rapidly expanding export and import; this, and not the rubbish about overpopulation, is the clue to her development. But that development was bound to be particularly stormy, predatory and aggressive.

Hitherto the aggressive war policy of Japan has been taken as an outcome of rapidly developing imperialism. But there are peculiarities in the structure of Japanese imperialism giving special impetus to a fascist war economy. The peculiarity is that the domination of finance-capital is intertwined with feudalism. To the monarchist semi-feudal machinery of state there corresponds semi-feudal exploitation in agriculture. The combination of monopoly capitalism with surviving feudalism rests upon the most intense exploitation of the working class and the peasantry of Japan. With the consequent poor development of the home market, the drive for overseas markets and colonies becomes ever more rapacious and ever more insatiable.

The conditions of the working class are only comparable with those of Western Europe a century ago. Average wages of workers producing with high efficiency according to European standards are extraordinarily low.

Hours of labour are excessively long. An enquiry by the Ministry of the Interior (quoted in the weekly *Toio Kiedzai*, March 23, 1936) showed that in 1,275 large factories the working day ran to 12 to 13½ hours; in 20 per cent. of the factories it exceeded 14 hours. In certain large textile factories it actually reached 19 hours.

In recent years there has been an increase in output per worker and a fall in real wages.

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	Yearly Output per Worker in Japan 1929 = 100	Index No. for Wages per Day in Tokio 1920 = 100	Index No. of Retail Prices in Tokio July 1914 = 100
1927 ...	79.6	—	—
1928 ...	90.5	—	—
1929 ...	100.0	—	—
1930 ...	105.3	—	—
1931 ...	112.0	94.7	136
1932 ...	119.3	93.5	137
1933 ...	125.9	95.2	146
1934 ...	128.4	95.6	149
1935 ...	129.3	97.0	152
1936 ...	129.7	97.9	159

The latest figures given are for 1936, and thereafter Japanese statistics are increasingly hard to obtain and increasingly unreliable. This summer of 1941 the Mitsubishi Bank stated it was suspending its statistical publications. But it is clear that, especially since the beginning of the war with China in summer 1937, the lot of the Japanese workers has worsened rapidly.

What of the peasantry? The peasant has to pay out of his harvest over 50 per cent. to the landlord and 20 per cent. for fertilisers, without which the soil is barren. Consequently, the peasant falls into debt, and the sum total of his indebtedness has increased gigantically in this century (from 746 million yen in 1905 to 4,590 million yen in 1929 and 7,000 million yen in 1934—according to the journal *Tsiuo Koron* of March, 1935). Hence evictions and the growth of a landless peasantry, leading to agrarian conflict and ultimately to agrarian revolution. Large-scale landholders (1 per cent. of all landholders) own 26 per cent. of all the land. The Emperor and his family own over a million and a half hectares of the best land; $2\frac{1}{2}$ million peasants own less than half a hectare each. The landholding peasants, 93 per cent. of all landholders, have only one-half of the available land. Upon both peasant proprietors and tenants, with incomes diminishing throughout the century, the burden of taxation falls more and more heavily in recent years.

It is not surprising that, with the worsening of conditions, there has been "agrarian unrest": the extent is shown by officially registered conflicts (ranging from court proceedings to arson of landlords' manors and collisions with the police), which grew from 1,578 in 1922 to 1,866 in 1928, to 2,478 in 1930, to 4,000 in 1932 and 6,824 in 1936.

Thus increasing poverty and ruin is the lot of the Japanese proletariat and peasantry. Feudal-capitalist exploitation holds back the development of the home market; and Japanese imperialism, greedily seeking for markets overseas, resorts to seizure of colonies and wars of conquest and enslavement. From this, however, comes no solution; but, on the contrary, the fascist war economy of the last few years has sharpened the internal contradictions.

And now, since December 7, 1941, the extension into the world war of Axis fascism enormously increases the strain of this internal conflict. Herein lies the fundamental weakness of Japanese Fascist Imperialism.

Already before the war it was clear that the one way out for the people of Japan was the destruction of the feudal-imperialist regime; the abolition of feudal relations in the countryside, the liberation of the whole people from the repression of trade unions and working-class political parties, the liberation of Japanese women from a worse than feudal subjection, the overthrow of the semi-feudal machinery of Government, and the establishment of a republic with an eight-hour day—in short, a bourgeois-democratic revolution. But this revolution of the whole people cannot be led by the compromising bourgeois parties of Japan, subservient to the trusts, soaked in imperialist plunder and kow-towing to everything most foul and reactionary in Japanese imperialism. The driving forces of the revolution can only be the Japanese working class and peasantry, whose elemental and spontaneous rising in August, 1918 (the "rice riots"), shook Japanese imperialists, and who have since then gone through an experience of suffering and repression that has matured their wrath far beyond the limited aims of 25 years ago.

Defeat in war may well release the volcanic forces of the democratic anti-fascist revolution within Japan; and their mounting volcanic pressure will help to bring about that defeat.

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Strategic Notes on the Far East

by DOROTHY WOODMAN

(*Secretary, China Campaign Committee*)

FOR a century British policy in the Far East rested on certain assumptions: the superiority of the white man, the divine right of the British as rulers and, above all, the natural right of the British ruling and commercial classes to enjoy a high standard of living, based on the cheap coloured labour and raw materials of the areas which to-day Japan is occupying or attacking. Furthermore, there has been a theory, implicit in British policy in the Far East, that the spirit of the Anglo-Japanese Alliance would live on, and that Japan would be perfectly willing to accept British co-operation as a junior partner in the development of East Asia. Most of these theories have been exploded by the remarkable resistance of the Chinese people, who have at last been accepted as an ally, although their value was obvious throughout the long years of British appeasement. The incompetence and complacency of British traders and officials in Malaya have exploded the rest. The era of the white man's rule at the expense of the Chinese and the Malayans, the Indians and the Filipinos in the Pacific is over. Affairs are in the melting-pot of Asia and the future is unknown, although the awakening of the peoples, the strength and vigour of the Chinese and the example they have set are factors which we may take as certain.

Mr. Cecil Brown, who refused to broadcast lies about the numbers of British aeroplanes in Malaya, has said with American frankness things that were known but not published about the social rot of the rubber planters and the tin traders in the peninsula. Nothing has ever been done to make allies of the Chinese, the Malayans or the Indians in the area. Little wonder is it that these people stood by surprised as they watched their "superiors" retreating village by village. They had been refused any political organisation. The Kuomintang was illegal; apparently Mr. Duff Cooper seems to have intervened on behalf of the leader, who was still in prison. And he had the surprising shrewdness to have circulated a Communist manifesto which urged the mobilisation of resistance to the Japanese. This then is the social background against which the spectacular retreat in Malaya must be described. A detailed inquest is premature, but when the inquest is made, it is not only the guilty who must be blamed, but the system which allowed the events to happen.

On December 8 Japanese expeditionary forces landed on beaches in north-east Malaya, at Padang Sabek, and soon made their way to the strategically placed aerodrome of Kota Bharu. Thailand was occupied so that her bases could be used on the Malayan front. Kota Bharu was taken on December 10, and since then the Japanese have made one long advance down the east coast. On the west coast of the peninsula, Japan has had the same results. Their troops entered Kedah on December 11 and marched on with little resistance to Sungei Patani, on to the island of Penang, where they were able to collect a fleet of barges and small ships left behind, much to their convenience, and then on to Ipoh, the centre of the tin mining industry. At the beginning of January the Japanese landed troops from the sea on the west coast. Small craft, mostly sampans and junks, towed by launches, made landings at the mouth of the Bernam River, and then spread out southwards and eastwards, and joined in with the main columns to attack and to take Kuala Lumpur. This same tactic has been adopted since, new landings having been made at Malacca and now, on January 18, at the mouth of the River Muar, which is only about 100 miles from Singapore. Meanwhile, on the east coast, by the same date, the Japanese have reached Kuantan and are pressing southwards. Singapore, the gateway to the Far East, is in a dangerous position, and, even if it were held, it is doubtful whether it can be used, as the Japanese dominate if not control the Straits of Malacca. During the period since December 8

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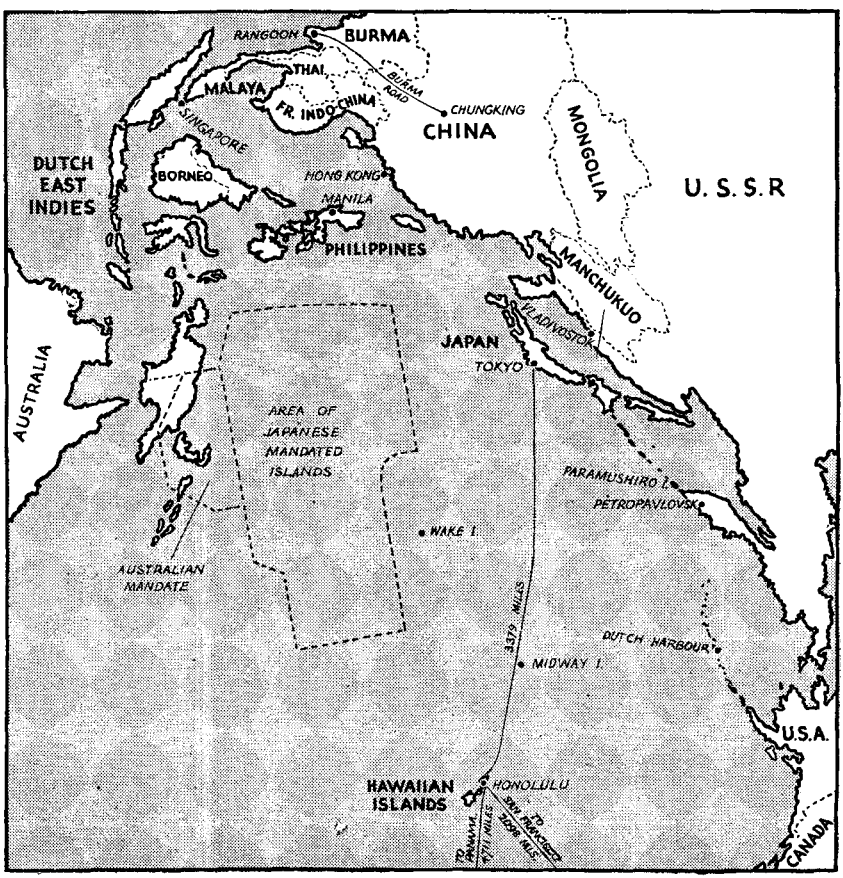
British and Australian, Malayan and Indian troops have been in action, and the bombing of transports and certain areas has been carried out on a small scale, insufficient to affect the main issue. A Chinese Council has been formed to mobilise all the resources of the 300,000 Chinese in Singapore, and there is now a unified command in the area. Japanese troops may find more resistance in Singapore than their easy victories have led them to suspect.

December 7 Roosevelt called "a day of infamy" in Japanese history. On the next day, she began the attack on the Philippines. Combined navy, military and air attacks have proved too strong for the Filipinos, who have shown a great deal of resistance. But they were greatly outnumbered; on one day, December 22, the Japanese used 80 troopships carrying about 80,000 men, in Lingayen Bay, north of Manila. Manila fell on January 2. General MacArthur's troops are still



THE PACIFIC THEATRE OF WAR
(Mapped from an unusual angle)

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holding out along the right flank of Manila down to Corregidor Bay. The Japanese have made a landing on Mindanao, the southernmost of the Philippines, and are using Davao as a base for their operations in the third of Japan's campaigns, viz., against Borneo and the Pacific islands. Recent bombings of the Minahassa Peninsula in Celebes, combined with the successful attack on the east coast of Borneo and the capture of Tarakan, suggest an ambitious pincer movement to enclose the Netherlands East Indies in its grip. The British-Dutch occupation of Portuguese Timor on December 18 was an obvious precaution in view of its nearness to Australia.

The war has come to the doors of Australia, and it is here that the most lively political repercussions have been registered. Mr. Curtin, writing in the *Melbourne Herald*, suggested that a military alliance with the United States was necessitated by geographical considerations. The Australian press has adopted a violently critical attitude to British failure to prepare for the Japanese attack. The Alliance signed in Washington on January 2, and the announcement on the following day of a unified command in the south-western Pacific, were both welcomed in Australia. Dr. Evatt, Minister for External Affairs, expressed the views of a wider public than the Australian when he suggested that this was an alliance which might have taken years to obtain if Japan had not entered the war. The Australians are acutely aware of the dangerous position they hold; they are not impressed by any help they have received as a member of the British Commonwealth of Nations, and they are not likely to be willing to return to the *status quo ante* December 8, 1941. They border the Pacific—where, in less than a fortnight, Japan was able to take Wake Island, Midway and Guam, and heavily bomb Pearl Harbour.

The last front is in many ways the most important. Here, the Chinese have proved their value, and also their high morale after four and a half years of fighting. Chiang Kai-shek has offered the fullest co-operation. He gave it in an important diversion during the siege of Hong Kong, and Chinese troops have now entered Burma to assist in making a strong defensive position for the Burma Road. The successful counter-offensive against Japan's third effort to take the strategic town of Changsha and the subsequent retreat of Japanese troops shows how valuable our Chinese ally can be in the field. The more the stupidity of helping to arm Japan for the past four years!

If we look at the world war to-day, the two most vital factors are Chinese resistance in the Far East and Soviet resistance in Europe. The Chinese, undeveloped industrially, have shown what can be done if the political basis of resistance gives courage and resolution to the people. The moral is one which must be constantly remembered in demanding freedom for the peoples of India and of Burma, who may very soon be thrown into the centre of the struggle.

The Editor of LABOUR MONTHLY will be very glad to receive contributions in the form of finished articles or of suggestions and data for articles. The customary proviso must be made that no responsibility is undertaken for manuscripts sent to him nor can he promise to enter into correspondence regarding contributions not accepted.

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Planning and Propaganda

by CLOUGH & AMABEL WILLIAMS-ELLIS

A SUDDEN rise into respectability can be almost as disconcerting as the more familiar reverse process. Since *The Times* and the U.S.S.R. have declared themselves militantly anti-Nazi, we, whose heads and hearts have been somewhere around the right place these twenty-five years, suddenly find ourselves addressing large and influential audiences on the achievements of the Soviet Union. His Worship the Mayor is in the chair, the leaders of local society are on the platform, where the grand piano, presently to accompany both "God Save the King" and the "Internationale," is prophetically draped with the Union Jack and the Red Flag, sociably intertwined.

Now the audience at such a meeting requires an adaptation of technique which it does not always get. Let us take a specific instance. One of the present writers was to speak to just such a gathering, and was preceded by an earnest and eloquent youth who reeled off official Soviet pronouncements, instructions and reports which he wove into a naive presentation of the U.S.S.R. as a country in which the last word had been said on the organisation of human society; as a set-up in which a final good-bye had been said to human frailty, and in which to plan was to achieve.

What was the consequence? What was the effect on the audience whom we were trying to bring to a better understanding of vast and impressive achievements? Its effect was to reawaken cynicism. They had had the previous "ape-picture" sponsored by our pre-war press proved a fake by the history of the last six months, and, partly because of this, they suspected that this suddenly revised "angel-picture" might be equally fraudulent.

What was needed was a presentation of the Soviet Union much more like the picture which Soviet citizens draw when they are among themselves—at meetings, at conferences of special bodies, in their own press—of this or that aspect of their aspirations and achievements. For our experience is that whether literature, town planning, production or education is the subject discussed, "self-criticism" always has a place in the discussion. What is good is praised, achievements are hailed, but where a plan has proved faulty, or where achievement has fallen short, criticism is frank, helpful and often startlingly outspoken.

Stalin once condemned the "Halleluia Chorus" attitude. But its persistence outside Russia was for a long time natural and perhaps inevitable. It was for many of us hardly humanly possible not to overstate in the effort to counterbalance the continual new or recurrent slanders which were circulated. But after all "Our Riga Correspondent" has now definitely ceased to function. But we suggest that the time has come when advocates of the Soviet way of doing things should at last feel themselves sufficiently at one with the Soviet methods to take over also the much more realistic Russian way of talking.

The meeting that the earnest and eloquent young man had harangued with such unfortunate results was restored to a more receptive frame of mind when the next speaker adopted a different attitude. Other mixed meetings have given both of us the same impression, and so have Forces audiences. The people who come to such meetings have now accepted the fact that citizens of the Soviet Union are people with like passions to our own; they have clearer heads maybe, but are not otherwise or substantially very different. They are willing to entertain the idea that the U.S.S.R. may be much more rationally governed than we are—the fact alone that Red armies have been so much more successful than French, British, Belgian and Dutch armies seems to suggest some such conclusion, and they are ready for it. But to suggest that the man and woman in the street and in office in Russia never makes a mistake, never guesses wrong, is never human and therefore fallible, rightly offends the commonsense of the British men and women who are listening.

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We have often wondered whether the much greater freedom of comment and criticism customary in the U.S.S.R. is one of the reasons for the singular popularity of conferences and meetings shown by its citizens. About five years ago one of the present writers attended a congress of architects and town planners, and a year before that the other attended a conference of authors. Both these occasions were prominently publicised (we might almost have been football teams or movie stars), and the public not only oversubscribed for the available tickets of admission (this sometimes happens in England, for instance at last year's meeting of the British Association), but actually sat out the lengthy sessions and apparently followed highly technical discussions with attention. There was another feature of the proceedings which distinguished them comparable gatherings in this country. In both cases the consumer was represented. Deputations of workers on the Metro, from various factories, round Moscow or far away, peasants, soldiers, girls and boys, all told the authors what they wanted to read and what, in their opinion, the writers ought to write about. Housewives, women workers, men workers and school children told the architects and town planners what were the things that they looked for in the plan either of a house or of a city, while, for instance, a prima donna forcefully criticised the acoustics of a new opera house. This contact between producers and consumers runs most beneficently all through Soviet public life.

It might be interesting to try to follow up what our line ought to be if, as has been here suggested, we decide that we are now, here in Britain, living in an atmosphere in which we can afford to try to learn not only from the tremendous achievements of the Soviet Union, but also (as does the U.S.S.R. itself) from the mistakes which have been made there. Let us take town and regional planning as an example. It is the field best known to one of the present writers, and one moreover in which we in Britain shall have to take immediate action after the war.

In the U.S.S.R. town planning groups are formed. Such groups consist of about twenty technicians, including engineers, surveyors, draughtsmen, and is provided with travelling headquarters and special train facilities. Such a group would be essentially concerned with the founding of entirely new towns and cities. The central planning organisation having decided roughly where such a new town was needed, the travelling group proceeds to the nearest rail point and decides with precision just where such a new town should in fact be sited within the given area in view of all the ascertained local conditions. The leader then rings up Moscow for its O.K., giving the map reference of the site. The whole group remains long enough on the site to lay out the skeleton of radial and trunk communications, and decide the general zoning of the new town. They then leave at the site one person well acquainted with the group's methods and intentions. It would be his duty to fill in the details until such time as the general outline was complete. At this point other architects would come along and be responsible for the design of individual buildings or, more usually, groups of buildings.

Now such a procedure, such a way of getting to work, is the town planner's ideal. Commonsense decisions are taken on the spot and are unhampered by the tangle of vested interests and ownerships which here impede every step towards the building of decent cities. That telephone call to Moscow is, in its simplicity, particularly poignant to anyone who has struggled with the complexities and vexations which are the rule here.

Now should we be well advised to advocate the adoption here of this Soviet procedure exactly as it stands? The answer is no. It is, in essence, a "clean slate" procedure, suitable to the opening up of sparsely inhabited places. Used here with our already dense population it would be highly undemocratic. Copied here to the letter it would violate the entire spirit of Soviet consultation with the consumer of which we spoke above. But while local co-operation and approval would have to be sought here, there is everything to be said for dictatorial powers for the planning group *plus* the central or regional planning authority and *plus* the representatives of the local inhabitants. This is an element that we should certainly struggle for. In every town and regional planning con-

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ference in this country the question of land nationalisation is avoided. The crying need for it lies below, underneath everything that is said. To some this carefully avoided subject seems like a dragon lurking in its cave. It is "not nice" to mention it, "not nice" to challenge vested interests. Long circuits—obvious circuits—are made to avoid the mouth of that cave. But any planning that can remotely be compared in efficiency with that of the Soviet Union will remain impossible until someone has the courage to challenge those particular vested interests. If there is not "high priority" in the liquidation of all such vested interests (that we all hope to see) the physical mould of our future life may be seriously deformed.

Another aspect of planning in the U.S.S.R., and one with which we in this country shall be very much concerned after the war, is the rehabilitation of existing cities, and more especially with the provision of decent living accommodation for their inhabitants somewhere within reach of their work. Visitors to the U.S.S.R. are often either bitterly disappointed or else triumphant at the low standard of accommodation and at the housing congestion which they see, in Moscow particularly. The standard in the Soviet Union is admittedly lower than it ought to be, lower even than in this country for instance, and here the standard does not, of course, nearly satisfy real human needs or make for health or efficiency. (The shocking truth is that housing standards all over the world are so far below the optimum that Great Britain with all its notorious black areas nevertheless comes high up the list; above such countries as the United States of America or France, to take two unexpected examples.) Why have the Soviet town planners fallen short in this primary task?

The answer is two-fold and obvious, and is explained at length by the Webbs in their exhaustive "Soviet Communism." The chief is, of course, that nowhere did Tsarist Russia fall behind the rest of the world more strikingly than in housing. Even in the most modern manufacturing cities. even in country districts where there was certainly no lack of space, it was the exception for an industrial worker and his family to have a separate dwelling place at all. A family had a space marked off in a big communal barn. One of the writers saw one of the old barracks in which workers were housed near Baku, and for a long time supposed that the interpreter meant that this was a "bothy" where unmarried men were accommodated. The truth as given by the Webbs seemed impossible :—

> An entire family—man, wife and children—would have a space (in an unpartitioned barrack-room) possibly six feet by twelve in which to live, sleep and cook. . . . There was no attempt to provide latrines or other like facilities.

Indian writers, such as Mulk Raj Annand, assure us that such conditions still prevail in India, but to most people in England they are so unfamiliar that the public is unable, unless the point is stressed, to make proper allowances for the level from which the present Soviet housing authorities started. In the agricultural areas things were only a little better. We have both of us seen in some districts one-roomed huts which the family still shared in the coldest weather with any stock that needed special protection from low temperatures—say a couple of calves, or a litter of new-born pigs. The second reason for the continued congestion of many Russian cities is the enormous increase in the population. Apparently in vain have limits been set by the town planners to the size, or at least the population, of Moscow. Fresh inhabitants sweep in as irresistibly as a rising tide; temporary inhabitants (such as university students) cannot be induced to leave. Unlike most English families Muscovites seem to like to crowd into the centre of the city. One of the authors, visiting a family who lived packed like sardines and who complained loudly of their lot, heard later to her amazement their casual mention of the fact that they had heard of a suitable flat at a suitable rent, but had not taken it because it was twenty minutes by bus or tram from the centre. Facts and idiosyncrasies such as these need stressing, and are useful, not harmful. They do not appal an English reader or listener. On the contrary, they throw into relief, humanise, and make convincing great achievements, and make it clear that these excellent things are done not in the abstract, in a sort of holy vacuum, but in an historical setting and by and for real human beings with the

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usual human limits to tractability and to knowing what is good for them.

We should perhaps now turn to see what lessons can be learned from successes and shortcomings in the field of execution—the actually putting up of new buildings and the reconditioning of old ones. Here again it is essential to bear in mind the background. In the period of the first Five Year Plan and just before it, the Soviets were, as we all know, faced not only with a housing shortage, but with a shortage of everything with which to remedy it. There was not enough seasoned timber, there were not enough skilled bricklayers, or plasterers, or joiners, or plumbers, or components, or fittings—not enough of anything of this sort, from baths to electric light meters. There were two schools of thought as to how this state of things could be tackled, and the problem was considered from this point of view: that is, the need for better housing for the workers was part of the cultural drive; without better housing the workers could not enjoy their cultural heritage. It was part and parcel of the great task of the "liquidation of illiteracy." But should the limited supplies of skilled labour and material be used to erect each year a comparatively small number of permanent dwellings or a rather larger number which could only be regarded as temporary? And should housing alone be tackled, or should the provision of Workers' Clubs, "Kitchen Factories" (communal restaurants), schools, headquarters for the local Soviets and the like be given an equally high priority? In the end it was decided to build permanent blocks of flats, not to undertake temporary housing, except for building workers' and "public buildings" of the kinds mentioned were given high priority. As it worked out, the housing projects thus far outstripped the supply of materials and trained workers. We remember well being guests in a just-erected block of flats whose fellows still had the scaffolding round them, and from our ill-fitting windows (the timber had warped) we observed the ill-laying of the bricks of the new structure.

"Why don't you sack that joiner if he's as bad as you say?" asked the architect member of the party of the intelligent young works foreman. "Because I should probably get someone even more inefficient in his place," was the foreman's comprehensive reply. And here, in our opinion, the planners, or at any rate the designers, of many of the public buildings were to blame. Simpler designs, designs that were relatively foolproof, could have been thought out. The architect member of the party told this to a slightly outraged planning commission to which he was asked to give his frank impressions. "Your planners and your architects have been too romantic." "You mean not romantic enough?" came back the query after the interpreter had done. They thought he must have been alluding to the architectural style, which purported to be severely functional. When the meaning and implications of the comment had been explained they were interested in what seemed to them an entirely novel point of view and soothed when the architect went on to add that after all human beings were bound to make mistakes sometimes, and that the Soviet mistake of doing the right thing rather badly was a great deal better and also probably easier to set right than was the much more fundamental mistake that we made—that of doing the wrong thing extremely well.

Here again, if we can discuss the results of the various Soviet decisions really objectively and can learn, as they do, by their mistakes as well as their amazing successes, we shall find the result extremely helpful. With a much larger number—proportionately—of skilled building tradesmen, with not nearly so vast an area to tackle, with a shrinking instead of a rapidly increasing population we shall, nevertheless, after the war, be faced with building needs far beyond our immediate resources. If, as we who write or read the LABOUR MONTHLY all hope, we agree to add to our list of necessary buildings in each town, whether bombed or whole, such institutions as nursery schools, communal restaurants or canteens, workers' clubs, theatres, libraries, adequate hospitals, clinics and so on, the excess of needs over resources will be still more considerable. We should study the results of the "priorities" in the planning drive of the Soviet Union, and then translate them into terms of our own circumstances, material and (if we can prophesy) political.

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In view of such factors we might, for instance, decide on a slightly different order of priority, and we might decide that it may be better in some cases to build temporarily. The methods which have been used in the U.S.S.R. for enlisting public interest in the replanning of the country must certainly be attempted here. The "consumers" of town and regional planning must be consulted at every turn, not only because "consumers' control" is a good thing in itself, but because it is unlikely that our replanning will be attempted in so favourable a political atmosphere that public pressure and public interest will be dispensable. Unless the workers themselves insist on rational planning, decent housing and a proper provision of the right sort of community and public buildings, and insist with some knowledge of what the more progressive experts could do if they had the facilities, too little will be done, and much of that will be of the wrong sort. But here the atmosphere is favourable. The destruction of so much of so many of our cities, the experience of the evacuation of persons and industries, the fact of troop movements, has made people think about such problems; travel and disturbance have given a very large number of people a background of contrast. It is at last possible to interest large masses of comparatively unpolitical people in planning, and to make them feel intelligently and even hotly about the impact of bad planning and inadequate housing on their lives.

Another side of the technical problem will, of course, be that of the building industry itself. There is much to be changed here as every trade unionist knows. Till we have got rid of a great many anomalies we cannot expect workers in the building trade to give us the high productivity that our great tasks will demand. Not only must such anomalies as "wet time" be tackled, but no one with knowledge of the industry can doubt that important speeding up could be effected if the workers in the industry were properly consulted and informed. It is common to find that men working on a building job have never seen the plans and do not know if what they are building is a cinema or a block of flats or offices. What wonder that the music-hall joke about the plumber's mate and the tools has a foundation in fact! But above all the pre-war regular workers in the trade must not only have, but be convinced that they have, security of employment, or the absolutely essential "dilution" and the introduction of new trainees will very naturally be resisted. After all, we have a generation of building leeway to make up. Many architects are well aware of this. As Professor Reilly, lately head of architectural training at Liverpool University, said in a recent speech to a planners' congress :—

"When a university professor of architecture is appointed for life, and retires on a guaranteed pension, why must a bricklayer still be engaged by the day?"

Women and the War Effort

by JOAN BEAUCHAMP

WAR is no longer a far-away thing, fought by an army of picked men in Flanders or Gallipoli; it is here on the doorstep, in all our homes, as real and urgent a menace to the women of Stepney or Glasgow as it is to those of Moscow, Vladivostock, Libya or the Philippine Islands. Now that it has finally spread over the entire world all women are vitally concerned in its outcome; and British women with their traditional independence of spirit will not be backward in the struggle to preserve and revive liberty throughout the world.

The call to the twenty millions of women and girls in this country to throw themselves wholeheartedly into the war effort, leaving their homes to go into the war services and industries, has been sounded many times since the war began, but never so urgently and with such persuasive force as in the last few months. In the earlier months of the war there were many reasons why women's response to the call was slow and reluctant. The ruling class of Britain was not trusted by the working women, its war aims were suspect, enthusiasm for a cause sponsored

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by the Chamberlains and Halifaxes could hardly be expected, and the many material obstacles in the way of the mass entry of women into war industries raised a formidable barrier, the removal of which no one seemed to have the energy to tackle. When public opinion forced the removal of Chamberlain and the direction of the war passed into the hands of Winston Churchill, the pace of women's recruitment into the war services and industry perceptibly increased, but still the response to the call was by no means adequate.

It must be remembered that in Great Britain before the war roughly three-quarters of the female population were economically dependent upon a male breadwinner, and therefore tied to the home. This condition had a long historical background and was hallowed by tradition. Force of habit, tradition and education has a strong and lasting effect on people's minds and therefore, in spite of much feminist propaganda and the example of many women intellectuals, the majority of working-class women were quite content with the position of unpaid housewife, and were indignant when they were told that the Soviet women's position of economic independence was in advance of their own position. Paid work for women was regarded mainly as an interim occupation for unmarried girls, which provided for a time a welcome addition to the family exchequer, or as a sad burden on widows or other women unfortunate enough to have no male breadwinner to look after them.

The realisation that in a time of great emergency half the population cannot stand outside the national effort did not fully dawn upon the women of Britain until the end of June, when the Fascist thugs suddenly attacked the land of the Soviets. Then they began to understand the new meaning of the struggle, they saw that it had become *their* war, and that if they did not fight with all their energy and strength they would lose everything that made life worth living. The shock of the assault upon the Soviet Union, the workers' citadel, was sufficient to awaken the British workers from their lethargy, to destroy some of the traditional fetters upon the women's energy, to stir them to make an onslaught on the formidable obstacles which stood in the way of their full participation in the fight against the Fascist attempt to destroy all freedom.

In the middle of July the London Women's Parliament held its first session. Here 346 women, representing thousands of their fellow-workers, met together to discuss the problems of war service. Asserting their determination "to take our natural place at the side of our menfolk in our common struggle," they faced with courage and frankness all the difficulties women had to encounter in leaving the home and giving themselves up to the war effort, all the injustices and prejudices they had to contend with, the grievances of low pay and unequal treatment, lack of provision for children, the muddles and discouragement inevitable in a society which still believes fundamentally that "women's place is the home." But they did far more than air their grievances and discuss difficulties: they laid down a definite policy on all the matters affecting women's work, and set to work on a planned programme to destroy the obstacles in the way of full participation in war work, a programme which was added to and made more comprehensive at the second session in October.

Women have been greatly heartened and inspired by the wonderful example of Soviet women. The steadfast and consistent work of the women of Moscow and Kuibishev in industry and defence was described by Sir Walter Citrine, who visited Soviet factories in October*; Ilya Ehrenburg has told us how old women go into the textile factories to take the place of men, and after the working day is finished go on working, refusing to go home; in Soviet News-reels we see women in the front line, airwomen and parachutists, anti-aircraft gunners and Red Cross nurses; many also are the stories told of the heroism of the women guerillas, and of the determination and the self-sacrifice of the peasant women in burning their crops and houses and taking their children with them into the forest to live as best they can rather than surrender to the hated enemy.

Women in Britain are no less able to play their part; throughout the blitz housewives and workers in London,

* *Daily Herald*, November 17, 1941.

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Coventry, Plymouth and many other towns and villages stood their ground firmly and did their duty as wardens, first-aiders, ambulance drivers, nurses and fire-watchers; women in the Services are taking ever more responsible positions as their ability and enthusiasm is realised, and the importance of releasing men for the front line is recognised.

In the Commons debate on the National Service Bill Mr. Bevin paid a tribute to the women in industry. He gave cases of women who had to travel twenty miles through the black-out to their work and commented: "It takes some pluck to do that. Before you shout about absenteeism for heaven's sake appreciate what these women are doing." The figures he gave were significant of the change which has taken place in the last six months. He told us that since war broke out a million women have been transferred to munitions production. He commented: "I have no doubt there might have been more, but you have to get over an awful lot of prejudice against the employment of women which is not limited to one side." He said further: "Of that million—and I say this because there are a lot of wild charges about women idlers—a quarter of a million have come from unoccupied and married women and domestic servants. That is a fairly good response from people who had domestic responsibilities, to come back into industry to help the war."

Over 3,000,000 women have been registered since conscription was applied to women, and of these 900,000 have been interviewed. At present over 12,000 women are being transferred weekly to the Services* or war industry. In 17 months of war over 1,250,000 women have been transferred in this way—more than in the whole period of the last war.

Conscription will now be extended to 1,200,000 unmarried women between 20 and 30, but actually at least two-thirds of these are already in national service. Of the 400,000 to be newly conscripted it is estimated that the majority will come, as Mr. Lees Smith put it in the Debate, from "the comfortably-off section," and the Bill will therefore tend to lessen class differentiation. From the point of view of class inequalities the great flaw in the Bill is its exemption from conscription of all married women, including the childless and idle. Dr. Edith Summerskill challenged the Government on this point: "Was the wedding ring to act as a magic charm to release from all obligations the wealthy, independent, childless married woman who was living in an hotel or a delightful country reception area? Was the Government going to create a privileged group of well-to-do camp followers who would not have to go into the war industries?" Mr. Bevin's answer was, in effect, that Servicemen, particularly those who have been sent overseas, do not like their wives to be conscripted, but when challenged as to the number of Servicemen who had expressed this opinion he skilfully evaded the question.

Nevertheless the National Service Act, with all its gaps and inconsistencies, will mean for an enormous number of women the end of the old life and the old outlook; the widening of women's horizons, the building up of new communal institutions, will bring a social upheaval which will exercise a vast influence on British life long after the war is ended.

British restaurants, nurseries and nursery schools, school meals and such amenities are increasing, but the drive in this direction needs to be vastly accelerated. Married women are already playing a big part in the national effort. Many thousands of them are working a long week in war factories, although their average earnings are officially stated to be only £2 4s. 4d. per week,* and the difficulties of food, transport and care of children are colossal. The strain on their health and the happiness and welfare of their families cannot be under-estimated, and it is up to the trade unions and all women's organisations to see that the programme of minimum demands as laid down by the London Women's Parliament is carried out as rapidly as possible.†

* Conditions in the A.T.S. could be remedied, amongst other things by more allowance for initiative, by promotion from the ranks, and by more democratic methods.

* Under the Royal Ordnance Factories agreement now raised to £3.

† At its session on January 18 a poignant example was given by a young married woman with three children of the obstacles to effective war work caused by the lack of nursery schools.

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The organisation of part-time work on a mass scale is of the utmost importance for bringing into industry the many thousands of women whose household responsibilities make it impossible for them to work on any other basis. Mobility of labour is of great importance, and it is necessary to attract women to the new factories dispersed throughout the countryside. Young women without children will be quite willing to go to such factories if proper provision is made, and the provision of hostels is a step in the right direction, but 40 hostels for 50,000 girls is not enough, and the 22s. 6d. a week charged is too much while wages remain so low. Moreover, the amenities of hostels have to be made much more attractive.

The question of wages is a matter for the trade unions, as is also the most urgent question of the rapid organisation of all these women. Trade unionists must train the women, welcome them into the unions, see that their interests are specially catered for, insist that all fear of undercutting is removed by enforcing the correct rate for the job, irrespective of sex. Let it never again be said that a woman who had been working in a factory for 32 years had never been asked to join a union! The unions must take up strongly the question of the woman's minimum; 43s. is not a subsistence rate, and a woman cannot be expected to work long hours if she finds that, when income tax is deducted, the net increase in the family income is not worth the trouble.

The question of hours, again, is a very urgent one. It has been proved, beyond doubt, that a seven-day week over a long period does not increase, but rather reduces, output, and still many employers insist on it. A 55- or 60-hour week merely wears the women out and defeats its own object. Only the full co-operation of healthy women, living and working under decent conditions, can give the maximum output.

Women must be encouraged to elect their own charge-hands, to participate equally with men in Shop Stewards' Committees and Production Conferences. Only thus can they bring their minds and wills, as well as their bodily capacity, into the struggle, even as the Soviet women have done, and only on such a basis of the full and enthusiastic co-operation of men and women can we win the final victory in the gigantic task which lies before us.

Notes of a Patriot

On the Russian Soul and the Scottish Generals, St. Victor of the Bleeding Heart, and the Dreadful Brutality of the Soviets

by ALLEN HUTT

AS a patriotic Englishman I am incensed to find, at this present supreme crisis of our country and the whole world, that we have in our midst certain persons who carry on unhelpful propaganda. I do not have in mind the avowed Fifth Columnists. I am thinking of the gentry who constantly "hint a doubt or hesitate dislike" of our first great ally, the Soviet Union, and thus in effect disrupt the nation's solid front.

Open anti-Soviet propaganda of the old type is, of course, not possible at this moment; nor would it be at all healthy for the propagandist. I need only refer to the remarkable account, by H. R. S. Philpott in the *Daily Herald* of January 15, of the triumphal tour of the Soviet trade union delegation; especially the stress laid by this experienced Labour journalist on the growing enthusiasm of our workers and soldiers for the social structure, and not merely the military successes, of the U.S.S.R.

The anti-Soviet line is bound, therefore, to be somewhat oblique. The sowing of doubts, the exploitation of stale old tricks (the counterposing of "democracy" and "dictatorship"), the use of ingenious innuendo, form the main stock-in-trade of the individuals with whom I am concerned.

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I propose to take three exhibits. I will limit them to these—Vernon Bartlett, M.P., radio and Bouverie Street star, Victor Gollancz, chieftain of the present Left Book Club, and a certain Maurice Edelman, who publishes *chez* Gollancz and appears as a *New Statesman* Russian "expert." Three aspects of the "doubt and dislike" line shall also suffice. They are as follows :—

(1) *There is no democracy or liberty in the Soviet Union.* Bartlett, on his return from an official visit to Moscow, was the pioneer here. He made some stir at a political luncheon by "courageously" proclaiming that the Anglo-Soviet Alliance must not blind our people to the lack of liberty in the U.S.S.R. ; he added that "he personally" could not respect a Government which kept so many of its citizens in gaol, etc. I need only comment that the humblest British conscript could reply, paraphrasing Lincoln's retort about Grant's whisky drinking: "If we did the same, and put enough of the right people in gaol, maybe we'd win victories too." Bartlett equally complained that the Soviet press was "controlled" (shades of our own censorship and the M.o.I.'s "guidance" notes !)

Where Bartlett rushes in, shall Gollancz fear to tread ? The large warm heart of St. Victor (recent preacher of "truth and love") bleeds at the thought of "the crimes committed by the Soviet Government"—his own words, pronounced at a Garden Suburb gathering, and reported in the *Hampstead and Highgate Express*, December 12, 1941. He went on to say that "Russia was not Socialist in everyday practice. There had been a steady diminution of democracy in the Soviet Union," and sought to fire his hearers with enthusiasm for the Alliance by references to "the canalisation of opinion . . . by the State . . . so many restrictions of censorship on opinion and the Press . . . poor standard of living."

Bartlett further showed his hand in a B.B.C. postscript on December 7 and in a *News Chronicle* feature on December 9. The first was nominally a talk on democracy versus dictatorship. It pointedly excluded the U.S.S.R. from any consideration under the first category (contrast the powerful characterisation of the massive democracy of the Union by Beatrice Webb in her new introduction to "Soviet Communism"), and wound up with the assertion that all over Europe people were looking to Britain for leadership in building Europe on a basis of democracy after the war. The second was a review of the past decade in world politics which as pointedly omitted any reference whatsoever to the solitary stand of the Soviet Union against aggression in the past, and excluded the U.S.S.R. from joint leadership in organising world peace after the war—that being the "equal obligation" of Britain and the United States.

(2) *Nazism and Communism are alike evil.* This is stinking fish with a vengeance, and the salesman must walk warily. In Bartlett's animadversions, for example, this notion is only implied. It is there, none the less. When he told his tale about political prisoners he did not speak of Soviet Dachaus ; but that was the impression left on his hearers' minds. When he gave his postscript he did not say that the U.S.S.R. and Hitlerite Germany were comparable dictatorships ; he described dictatorship in such terms that the ignorant or prejudiced listener might well reach that conclusion.

It has remained for that respectable journal, *The Economist*, to let the cat out of the bag. In a special article by an anonymous correspondent in its issue of December 27, it was stated that "brutality, purposive cruelty, a savage disregard for human life," were characteristics not only of Nazi Germany, but also of . . . Russia. Too terrible, the "brutality" of the Red Army's offensive ! "National Socialism," the writer said, "is borrowed . . . at two removes from Bolshevism," and proceeded throughout the article to speak identically of "Gestapo or Ogpu." Tell that to the Gestapo !

(3) *New Russia is only Old Russia after all.* The smell of this is even more ancient and fishlike than No. 2, historically speaking. It is a peculiar irony that the rubbish about the "Russian soul" which Stephen Graham and others put over thirty-odd years ago to whitewash the Tsardom should now be resurrected to denigrate the Soviets. That is, however, the interesting feat performed by

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the egregious Edelman, above-mentioned, in the *New Statesman* of December 20, 1941. To lend an air of verisimilitude he even uses the Russian word for soul—*dusha*, in italics, like that. But it would need a lot more than a word or two in Russian to lend verisimilitude to so ludicrous a tissue of absurdity. I select the following from many ripe passages:—

(*a*) Dostoyevsky's "Oxford Group self-abasement . . . represents an aspect of Russian character . . . continuing in other forms under the Bolsheviks." Fiddlesticks; what, incidentally, of the modern Russian, let alone Soviet, repudiation of Dostoyevsky? (See, *e.g.*, Mirsky's critical writings.)

(*b*) Communist "purges" are on a par with the old-time Church-approved pogroms. As who should say the execution of Charles I was on a par with the judicial murder of Sacco and Vanzetti!

(*c*) "The self-exclusion of Russia from the Western world was the most important circumstance conditioning Russian life . . . until 1917." Let the fellow be referred to any primer of Russian history. In my time every schoolboy knew that Russian life had been conditioned for two hundred years, particularly during the formative period of the eighteenth century, by its contacts with the Western world, upon which its rulers drew for their pioneer soldiers, technicians and teachers. Not least, may I add, upon this country—and especially Scotland. Does Edelman not know, or is he discreetly concealing, the fact, that among the most famous military leaders of Russia from Peter the Great onwards were Marshals Gordon and Keith, Generals Drummond, Butler, Fanshawe; that the first head of the famous artillery school (which, like the Academy of Sciences, has really come into its own under the Soviet regime) was General Bruce? Examples could be indefinitely multiplied.

But, indeed, I should apologize for spending so much time on anyone who maintains the grotesque proposition that the Soviet Union represented no decisive break with the old Russia. And any innocents who might be taken in by such a flat-earther may refer to the unsolicited testimony of our leading old-time Russian experts, like Sir Bernard Pares and the late Dr. E. J. Dillon.

* * * * *

I have not taken this space to deal with what may seem to many a freak tendency because I consider it of much present importance. It has, however, a sinister potential significance; what useful ammunition it provides for the dark forces who may at some future date desire to turn against the U.S.S.R.!

Daily more and more of our fellow-countrymen become convinced "of the supreme contribution which Soviet Russia is destined to make to the liberation of Europe from its Nazi oppressors," and that "in Europe, Great Britain and Soviet Russia must become the main bulwarks of a peace which can be preserved, and can be made real, only through their joint endeavour" (*The Times* first leader, December 29, 1941). In defence of that conviction it is essential to be on guard against the false friends as well as against the open foes.

The increasing difficulties of periodical publications, with which we have kept our readers acquainted during the past year, compelled us last month to resort to a smaller size of page and of type.

The new format of the LABOUR MONTHLY has been welcomed by most of its readers, to judge from the letters we have received.

Several point out that the smaller size in extremely readable type enables the magazine to be carried easily in the pocket.

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The German Rear

by JOHN KNIGHT

IN his great speech on November 6 Stalin described the situation in Germany as follows :—

Only Hitlerite fools can fail to understand that not only the European rear, but also the German rear of the German troops, represents a volcano, ready to erupt and bury the Hitler adventurists.

Germany is a volcano. There is sabotage in many factories, especially in armament works. Hundreds of minor Nazi functionaries have been dismissed recently; they had become unreliable—because of the propaganda activity of the German opposition. Many raids have been made in workers' districts: the Gestapo is searching for printing machines and duplicators. Almost daily the Press reports sentences of imprisonment against Germans who treat prisoners of war or foreign workers as their brothers, suffering from the same tyranny and terror. Over a thousand members of the opposition have been beheaded since June 22 for anti-fascist activities. The Gestapo has been strengthened considerably in recent weeks by withdrawals from the front because of increased resistance against the Hitler system and its criminal and terrorist actions. On the front several thousand soldiers have deserted in recent months—even before the defeat of the German army at Rostov.

Foremost among the anti-fascist fighters in Germany are the German Communists, wherever action is taken, in factories and mines, in the fields and in military units. The German Communist Party is to-day the only political opposition party with a working organisation within Germany, the only one which speaks to-day to the German people with greatly enhanced authority: greatly enhanced by the simple fact that it has led the fight against Hitler under terrible conditions for more than eight years underground, and that history has proven the truth of the warnings it gave to the German people. The most recent appeal* of the party has found its way to millions of Germans. The task it sets before the German people is clearly defined :—

The German people's sole salvation is to end the war. But to do this Hitler must be overthrown. . . . The hour has struck for our people to take Germany's fate in its own hands, to end the war and to obtain a peace with honour.

Hitler tries to keep the German people in his grip by asserting that his defeat would mark a catastrophe for the German people, a new and worse Versailles, dismemberment and destruction of Germany. But exactly the contrary is the case. Only if the German people continue to let themselves be misused by Hitler then the fate of Germany is sealed, then dismemberment and destruction must follow. The appeal of C.C. of the C.P. Germany says :—

But history shows that never have peoples perished for overthrowing criminal governments. Quite the contrary, the overthrow of such governments helped the material and moral resurrection of the nations.

How far has the German people progressed on its way to salvation? How much progress has the German people made in its fight against Hitler?

Hitler can count to-day on the big bourgeoisie, on the big monopolists in all German industries, in banking and distribution. All of them share the guilt of the Nazi crimes, and stand behind Hitler in his war upon freedom-loving nations. While in Great Britain and in the United States of America there is no class which as such favours the "most rapacious and piratical imperialists among all the imperialists of the world" (Stalin), while in these countries there is no class support for the National-Socialists, the "party of enemies of democratic liberties, of mediaeval reaction and blackguard pogroms" (Stalin)—in Germany there is a class which stands behind them, supports them: that class is the German big bourgeoisie.

But Hitler could not wage war so energetically if he had only the support of this

* A copy of this appeal was found on the body of a German soldier killed on the Eastern front.

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one class. There is another basis for him : the simple and terrible fact that he can still misuse the German people, that he still holds the German people in his grip. German soldiers are fighting at the front. German workers are toiling in the factories, producing the weapons of war.

True, there is an active and growing minority which sabotages Hitler's war effort against the Soviet Union. True, there is a vast majority which wants peace and freedom. Truly and rightly a German prisoner in the Soviet Union, one of 158 who made an appeal to the German people, said :—

We want the war to end because the whole thing is senseless. The real voice of the working German people, of all honest Germans, can only be heard in muttered tones. It is the duty of every working man and woman, desiring the immediate end of this crazy Hitlerite war, to do everything to ensure that this small voice penetrates throughout the German factories, throughout the units of the German army, wherever there are Germans suffering as a result of this frenzied Hitlerite war.

Yet Hitler's regime still grips the German people. The Gestapo and the swarming cohorts of the S.S.-men still maintain their hold on the German people. Desire for peace, the general loathing of the Hitler system, the great and deep sympathy for the Soviet Union have only partially found expression in deeds. Hence the sharp question in the appeal of the Central Committee of the German Communist Party :—

German workers ! Is it not a disgrace for you that you are not hindering Hitler in the prosecution of this war against the world's only Socialist State, that you forge the weapons against a country where the workers and peasants are in power ? Do you not realise that you are thereby forging the chains for your own, even worse, enslavement ?

German soldiers ! Do you wish to shed your blood and perish without honour as the serfs of reaction, in the war against a people courageously defending their country, their liberty and Socialist system ?

Hence, too, the appeal of the 158 German prisoners in the U.S.S.R. :—

The German people must prove, not in words but in deeds, that they have nothing in common with Hitler.

The German volcano is rumbling. It is the task of the best fighters of the German opposition to guide the German people to take the decisive step from general dissatisfaction and discontent to deeds, to acts against the Hitler system.

There are three ways to increase and widen the activity of the volcano which Germany is already to-day. The first one, the one which is before the opposition in Germany : to work more energetically still, to improve the methods of leading the discontented masses of the German people from words to deeds. The second way, which will facilitate enormously the work of the German opposition, is military defeats of the German army. The call for a Second Front against German fascist imperialism is at the same time a weapon of immense political importance. It will help the German people to raise the banner of revolution against Hitler's tyranny. The third way is the appeal to the German people, by wireless and leaflets, to overthrow the German fascist regime and to become an effective Ally in words and in deeds of the freedom-loving peoples of this world.

The first way to increase the activity of the volcano depends solely on the work of the German opposition inside Germany. The appeal of the C.C. of the German C.P. and the message of the 158 prisoners in the Soviet Union have put this task before the German people in very strong language, but warranted by the fact that this is the last opportunity for the German people to save itself, to avoid the danger of national destruction, and to create a new Germany.

The second way—the creation of a Second Front to hasten the downfall of German fascism, to save the British people untold misery, to relieve the gigantic strain upon the Soviet people, and to speed an eruption of the German volcano —that is the task set to the British people. It is a vital and urgent task.

The third task is a propaganda task to be fulfilled by those institutions who by wireless and other means can speak directly to the German people. Their task is to win the German people as an Ally in the common struggle against Hitler and German fascist imperialism. But how ? By pointing out the criminality of the Hitler regime, by encouraging the work of the German opposition, by helping the German anti-fascists, by showing them

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the light of a bright future for a German people which has overthrown the Hitler regime, and by explaining what it would mean if the German people continued to remain in the grip of the Hitler regime until its final military defeat.

The fight against German fascism is a difficult fight, demanding great sacrifices. Every day gained, every hour by which this fight is shortened means that thousands of lives are saved, and that factories and other instruments of production are preserved ready to be used for the great work of reconstruction before us. If we succeed in winning the German people as our Ally we shall shorten the war considerably. We shall save ourselves and other peoples from innumerable cruel sacrifices. And we shall have helped a people which has given much to mankind to find its way back into civilised society and into a bright future which all peoples want to build, after the war against German fascism has been finished victoriously.

Planning for more Food

by JOHN BOUNTY

IN the September issue of the Government's quarterly journal *Agriculture* there is a very interesting report of a survey of all the grassland of England and Wales, carried out on the eve of the war for the Ministry of Agriculture by a group of scientists and experts. The report is illustrated by a separate coloured map. The tremendous importance of such a report to the Government responsible for the food production of the country in time of war can be realised when it is grasped that over two-thirds of the agricultural land at that time was grassland.

For the maximum war effort, the maximum amount of food must be grown from our land, and the new war situation has drastically intensified this urgent necessity. In order to do this the fertility of the soil must be raised as high as possible, and above all maintained. The report gives recommendations for obtaining these two essential objectives for a proper long-term war policy.

After describing the terrible condition of British agriculture at the outbreak of war (only 1.2 per cent. of the pasture land was in the first grade) the authors say:—

> At the outbreak of war the country, with an agriculture based on semi-derelict permanent grass, was producing one-third of its total food from its own land. Under *correct management* the output from most of it could be increased many times over.

However, on the outbreak of war this report was shelved. Instead of "correct management" the Government embarked on a short-term policy of merely cashing in on the existing fertility of the soil, and ordered the ploughing up of grassland for corn, disregarding the fact that this by itself would quickly lead to diminishing returns. The adoption of this short-term policy can only be explained on the assumption that the Government thought it would be a short war, or else they were convinced that the U-boat and bomber would be ineffective.

If the policy of the last two years is allowed to continue, less food will be produced next year than this.

Fresh milk, butter, fresh meat, animal fats, etc., have got to be produced in maximum quantities from the grassland of this country. The cultivation of nourishing grass leys is just as important as ploughing up for corn. The scientists we have quoted show how by "taking the plough right round the farm," treating grass as one of the crops in the system of rotation, will produce succulent grazing for animals, which will in turn increase the fertility of the soil for when it is ready to be ploughed up for arable. Plough up as much land as possible *in a planned rotation* is this scheme.

When describing the terrible conditions of the land of this country in 1939 the report gives no reasons for this state of affairs—lays no blame anywhere. This must be borne in mind because most of those reasons are still in existence to-day, and have helped hold up a true national agricultural policy to date. It is true that the gravity of the present crisis is at last compelling the Government to revise many of its former policies, and the publi-

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cation of the Grassland Report may be a sign that, in agriculture too, it means to alter its approach. But there is a long way to go before all vested interests, prejudices and other forces of opposition are completely swept aside, and the maximum amount of food is produced. The people in the towns will have to quickly unite with those in the rural areas in demanding that the land is correctly managed, that Britain is farmed as a planned single unit, that science and expert knowledge is used to the utmost in this all-important branch of the war effort. In this war science for agriculture is as important as science for explosives. Science can improve methods of cultivation to release more men for the Forces. Science can increase the yield from crops and pastures. Science can grow more and yet maintain the fertility of the soil. The achievements of agricultural science in the U.S.S.R. show what could be done.

But there is another essential for an agricultural policy which will produce the maximum amount of food. The agricultural workers who produce the food, and who are to carry out the scientific theories must be given a decent standard of living. Without proper living conditions the intelligent educated workers will not be inclined to take up agriculture for a profession. Farm work is skilled work, and needs healthy, skilled, intelligent workers. Intelligent farm workers would work in conjunction with scientists, each helping the other. At the present moment the standard of living is so low in rural areas that a progressive young man shrinks to offer such an existence to a future wife and family.

In this war the land is one of our first lines of defence. All interests holding up a real agricultural policy are sabotaging the nation's war effort. The people must see to it that such a policy is carried out—a policy to produce the maximum amount of food from the land, to maintain its fertility, and to give producers of food a proper decent standard of living.

The Sense of History in Soviet Films

By RANDALL SWINGLER

THE film has always been the one form of production in which the Soviets have been generally admitted to be supreme. Tribute has been paid to the effectiveness of Soviet films in the past in the curious form of making it very difficult for them to be seen by the general public outside Soviet Russia. At the same time the development of cinematic technique in all other countries has owed practically everything to the achievements of the Soviet film industry.

Now that we are to have an opportunity of seeing not only current Soviet war-films, but some of the great feature films as well, it is worth considering some of the reasons for the immeasurable superiority of the Russians in this form of art.

The sense of history gives the Soviet films a breadth and stature which overshadows the best of the productions of this country or America. It also gives them their power in social development, their effectiveness as "propaganda." For it is the sense of history which creates in a people the consciousness of their human destiny which is morale at its highest.

Stalin's saying: "Only the people are immortal. Everything else is transient"—might be taken as the fundamental tenet of all Soviet film directors. Contrasting films like "Peter the Great" or "We from Kronstadt" with some of the finest Hollywood productions, such as "The Birth of a Nation" or "Emile Zola," we find that it is just in their treatment of humanity that the Soviet films have over the Americans something which critics have called "poetry" and which is really the tradition of true epic. In Soviet films the crowd is never just a mass, as it is in "Zola," but it is a human organism, photographically characterised. Tsar Peter himself is not differentiated from the mass, but grows out of it, an individualisation of the people. "Zola" and "Pasteur" are qualified by their difference, and their stories are presented as individual effort in face of the mechanics of the mass. The American method is to place the personal drama

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against the historical setting, as in "The Birth of a Nation," which narrows and flattens the photographic compass.

In American films whose directors have learned much of Soviet camera technique, the detail is environmental; natural effects, though often finely photographed, as for instance in "The Stage Coach," remain scenic, whereas Soviet directors give the very blades of grass a dynamic significance. Many "advanced" continental directors have imitated, but in a purely metaphorical way, the Soviet development of symbolisation in natural sequences. But these imitations have remained no more than artistic touches, parentheses, as in the Czech film, "Extase." British Documentary films, perhaps the most successful development outside the U.S.S.R., though often attaining a beautiful lyrical character, have lacked that sense of history, of social development, which could give epic stature to a study which at present is but a carefully observed and expressed "slice of life."

A final comparison, of the Soviet "Professor Mamlock" with the American "Confessions of a Nazi Spy" or "The Mortal Storm," marks the distinction in power and effectiveness most pointedly. The control, the broad humanity, the grasp of the historic situation, and at the same time the essential simplicity of the Soviet film make the American efforts, though considerably above the usual Hollywood standard, seem hysterical and melodramatic. In point of fact the reproduction of actuality in the Soviet film is more ruthless than in the others, and while it has an episodically tragic finish, the underlying motif, in that it shows the struggle as waged by the working people of Germany and continually sustained, is heroic and invigorating. While the American films, following their pattern of showing the individual emotions played against the background of Nazi brutality, are the worst form of propaganda, being effectively depressing, even terrorising, in their flat contrast of the puny personal values broken against the regimented mass. The tradition of Hollywood here defeats its own end. The morals of Nazism cannot be set up to fight against its ethics.

The Soviet films, then, have proved themselves unequalled both as art and propaganda for the reason that they have a conception of their art which is unified with the structure and aspirations of the society in which they live. Where there is no division of aims or interests within the community, they can regard propaganda not as the stimulus of mass-emotion to an immediate end, in the manner of a drug, but as the heightening of social consciousness in the whole people, the increased appreciation of human and national destiny. They have reached the stage in social development where art and propaganda meet, and take on a new quality and a new power. In films like "The Deserter," "We from Kronstadt," "Chapayev," which have the most direct propaganda value, there is no appeal to sentiment other than the simplest and commonest human feeling. In depressing contrast are some of the British and American romances about the R.A.F. and the Navy, where it is thought necessary to inject a strong dose of sexual sentiment to glamorise the task.

In the Soviet Union, "the hero of to-day," as Gorki said in 1928, "is the man of the masses," the man who lives up to the highest traditions of the working people of the world. In Hollywood the hero seems to be the human animal, his sentiments debased to the level of mating, toughness, dog-like devotion, and properly conditioned reflexes.

The Soviet's attitude is inspired by a supreme confidence in the people: the other by a vulgar contempt for the ordinary man.

The important Soviet historical film, GENERAL SUVOROV, *directed by Pudovkin and Doller, is to receive its first showing in this country at the Tatler Theatre, Charing Cross Road, London, on February 23rd. At this theatre there is a regular programme of the latest Soviet films, which are later available for showing in other parts of the country.*

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URGENT REMINDER

Will all those who have not yet acted on the request set out in the Announcement in the January LABOUR MONTHLY *please* do so at once, so that we may know how many copies of R. Palme Dutt's new book: BRITAIN IN THE WORLD FRONT, must be printed for those who choose this alternative? We particularly request that the form printed below should be used.

Also, will those who collected orders on Group Order Forms do all they can as well? We are willing to send them supplies of forms (as below) to assist them to get decisions from individuals who need to be seen or written to. (Postage will be refunded.)

N.B.—If it was not clear to everyone from the January Announcement that money already paid covers the new book, we wish to emphasise that no further cash has to be paid.

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